

EXPLORE THE MAGIC  
OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN PARKS

Arts and Culture Plan  
An Executive Summary



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## Out of the museum, into the park

### E X E C U T I V E   S U M M A R Y

*When you think Seattle parks, does your mind wander to African story telling, pottery wheels, video production and an exhibit of pig sculptures? Or to ball fields, basketball and beaches?*



Seattle Parks and Recreation is debunking the myth that art and culture belong solely in museums or performance halls. Hundreds of neighborhood and citywide arts and cultural opportunities are available to every age group through a rich and diverse program of classes, public art displays, multi-cultural activities and special events. Seattle Parks and Recreation offers fascinating and fun hands-on programs that teach and enrich individuals, their neighborhoods and communities.

Art and culture in parks is not a new concept. Visual arts have not only found welcoming homes in the natural landscapes of Seattle parks, but also have been used as expressions of community pride and creativity in community centers and recreation facilities. To ensure that the synergy created by the marriage of arts, culture and parks not merely *exists*, but grows and thrives through strategic design, Seattle Parks and Recreation recently adopted a comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan. Public process throughout the plan's development included valuable input from both the community and local arts organizations. To see the entire text of the plan, please visit [www.ci.seattle.wa.us/parks/Arts/Final.htm](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/parks/Arts/Final.htm);

highlights and goals of the plan are outlined here.

Seattle Parks plays a leadership role in providing and supporting accessible arts and culture programs. Art and culture are already basic components of recreation; and the marriage of art and parks enhances both experiences. But this doesn't mean you have to share your ball field with a string quartet.

Seattle Parks and Recreation has begun an active effort to increase participation in its arts and culture offerings through four major roles: as a provider of classes, public art, cultural facilities, and special events.

Although everyone has a different definition and appreciation for "art," Seattle Parks is confident that there's something in its broad scope of ever-evolving programs for everyone.

## LEARNING

The first step toward appreciating art is hands-on participation as an artist. Seattle Parks makes this easy, affordable and accessible, offering art classes at all of its 24 neighborhood community centers and encompassing each of the five traditional arts disciplines: music, dance, theater, visual and literary arts. Programs in more contemporary and evolving expression, such as film, media and technology, are a magnet for increasing numbers of young people.

Seattle Parks also offers in-depth training in specific arts disciplines, encouraging artists and enthusiasts to advance their skills in programs as diverse as video production and lapidary. Partnerships with non-profit performing and visual arts groups allow Seattle Parks to provide high quality, diverse, accessible and affordable arts and cultural experiences to citizens in all of Seattle's neighborhoods.

Goals: Offer introductory classes in art and culture at every community center.

Support specialized training in performing, visual or literary arts, through our partnerships and facilities such as Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle Asian Art Museum, Pratt Fine Arts Center, Seattle Public Theater at the Green Lake bathhouse, Spectrum Dance Theater at Madrona, Seward Park Art Studio, and Alki Bathhouse.

Align arts and cultural programming to increase and maximize benefits to the department and to the public.

## CONTEMPLATING

Seattle Parks and Recreation offers residents and visitors a vast and accessible outdoor museum, with more than 125 permanent works of art on display in Seattle parks, participation in the development of the Seattle Art Museum's Olympic Sculpture Park, traditional landscape and garden design, with Kubota Gardens and the Japanese Garden presenting specific cultural expressions, and temporary outdoor art exhibitions.

From the classic to the avant garde, the well loved to the controversial, these artworks

enhance the visitor's appreciation of both the art and the park environment. In most cases, the placement of artworks is carefully planned to support the park experience, resonate with the local neighborhood, or enhance learning about the natural, social, historical or cultural environment.

Goals: Involve artists in the early design of park facilities.

In 2001, Seattle Parks and Recreation revised its policy on the Placement and Maintenance of Visual Art Work on Parks Property to better guide decision-making on acquiring, placing and maintaining artwork on park property.



## PLAYING



By their very nature, parks are ideal venues for artistic and cultural events. Parks and community centers are natural gathering places for kids, teens, families and seniors. Park facilities that accommodate art and culture complement that role and empower participants in all cultural disciplines to better reflect their diversity.

**Goals:** Use art and culture to enhance the safe and welcoming environment of park facilities, by representing and reflecting the diversity of its users.

Design guidelines and requirements for art in parks facilities that accommodate the presentation and display of the performing and visual arts.

Increase accessibility to art and culture in parks.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

Seattle Parks and Recreation makes available a tremendous variety of both outdoor and indoor spaces for community building activities such as festivals, celebrations and special events. Parks, gardens and beaches, along with community centers and recreational facilities, are available and accessible for the diverse expression of local culture.

**Goals:** Strengthen non-profit partners that assist the department in delivering arts and cultural services to the public.

Encourage the use of park facilities for community celebration.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN: THE STRATEGY

Parks aren't usually the first place people look for art and culture. One of Seattle's best kept secrets is the wealth of art treasures and cultural richness found in our parks and community centers. A first step in expanding Seattle Parks' role as an arts facilitator is to attract more participants to *existing* programs and services. Seattle Parks is poised to build on the success of its art and culture agenda by using existing resources to meet the public interest.

Seattle is home to a large population of artists, outdoor vistas of unparalleled beauty, solid civic and corporate support for the arts, and strong arts and cultural agencies. Opportunities abound for local artists to teach classes at community centers and participate and perform in special events. Creative arrangements can be forged to make arts and culture happen for all citizens: scholarships for needy class participants, referrals for participants with special needs, or collaboration to identify talented students who are ready for more intensive training.



At the core of the Arts and Culture Plan is the belief that art is for everyone, without regard to age, race, gender, income, physical limitations, or economic or social class.

Strong leadership and adequate, easily available staff and resources are critical to the plan.

Goals: Recognize extraordinary art and culture initiatives and leadership within the Seattle Parks family.

Proactively market and celebrate Seattle Parks and Recreation's new and existing art and culture offerings.

Collaborate with artists, event producers, and arts groups to provide programming in park settings.

**Work with public and private partners to expand arts and cultural opportunities in underserved areas of the city and where opportunities have been absent.**

**Coordinate Seattle Parks and Recreation art and cultural initiatives through strong, centralized leadership, while decentralizing their implementation.**

Incorporate arts and culture into orientation, training, and annual work plans developed by Parks' employees.

What does "ART" look like in Seattle Parks?

It's more than a painting on a wall, more than an aria in an opera house. Lots more. A small sampling . . .

At **Medgar Evers Pool**, ART looks like a tile mosaic – the result of professional artists working with middle school children to create a memorial in the form of a whimsical under-the-sea motif. ART also means local jazz musicians entertaining swimmers each Tuesday evening.

**Jefferson Community Center** defines ART as rocks and clay, with a fully equipped lapidary and faceting shop, and a multi-level pottery program.

Ethnic dolls, masks, and ink and chalk drawings are just a sampling of the ART in **Yesler Community Center's** Art Reach Program.

ARTistic fish? **The Seattle Aquarium's** annual Salmon Homecoming Celebration is an extraordinary combination of cultural exchanges, educational programs, lively and colorful entertainment and political involvement – a tribute to the Native American belief that all things are connected.



The vast hangars at **Sand Point Magnuson Park** are perfect venues for indoor performances of everything from the Rain City Rollers and the First Nations Pow Wow to the Bindlestiff Family Circus, not to mention the hub for numerous Hollywood movie and television productions.

**Delridge Community Center** enjoys classical ART: The West Seattle Symphony practices there for all to hear.

ART is for everyone, evidenced by **Alki Community Center's** Special Population Art Program.

ART is the **Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center's** middle name, offering up performance art such as The Dream Keepers Series, classical music concerts and an African Arts Program that spotlights marimba, drums and dance.

**Seattle Parks' After School Activities Program (ASAP)** keeps young minds and bodies active with acting classes, visual arts, music, dance and drama. This ART program helps middle schoolers gain self-esteem and a sense of interdependence, as well as express themselves during the sometimes turbulent teen years.

At **Southwest Community Center**, ART looks like family hula dance classes.

No one will argue with the martial arts program at **Queen Anne Community Center**, where students learn the rich history, culture and skills of the martial arts of China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines.

ART at Seattle's **Japanese Garden** could be its annual Ikebana Exhibition that showcases exotic works of floral beauty.

**Seniors Making Art** explore ART in almost every medium, from sumi painting to quilt making.

Over 2000 kids per year take ART at **Pratt Fine Art Center** through programs such as Fired Up About Glass! And Kids Art Works, a free Saturday program.

The centerpiece of **Ballard ART** is the annual Norwegian Constitution Day Celebration that involves more than 300 youth learning and participating in traditional Nordic games.

Porcine ART was a high point at **Westlake Park** this summer, kicking off the Pigs on Parade exhibit that helped raise funds for the Pike Place Market.



**Zoo ART** is epitomized by a spectacular new African Village exhibit and its equally spectacular programming, including a storyteller acting out the role of a leopard while spinning a traditional African tale, and a real Maasi warrior.

Seattle is recognized for its creative citizenry, and we encourage you to continue to share ideas for integrating art and culture into recreational programs and parks. Better yet, get involved! Call 206-615-1705 for more information or to volunteer.